

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IX IRAN

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that nothing was done to relieve Soviet pressure on Azerbaijan. Listing the unsettled questions at Moscow, Secretary Bevin declared on his return to London: "One of the most important of these is the Iranian question. It has been the subject of a protracted exchange of views between Soviet Government and the Governments of the United States and Great Britain. Final agreement has not been reached, but discussions will continue through ordinary channels." ⁹ Commenting on the British and American attitudes on the subject, the London correspondent of the *New York Times* wrote on January 1, 1946:

That was a principal reason that Mr. Bevin came back from the tri-power parley of Foreign Ministers far less happy about the Moscow agreement than Mr. Byrnes. It is felt here that Americans are inclined to overlook the vital importance of Iran and the whole Middle East to the British Empire. What may have seemed to be a relatively minor question to Mr. Byrnes was a major one to Mr. Bevin.

The Moscow conference was a turning point in the development of the Soviet-Iranian dispute. The British, despite its failure, stuck to their idea that some compromise solution should be reached. That is why Sir Reader Bullard, upon his return to Teheran, was instructed to induce the Iranians to accept the Bevin scheme of a three-power investigating commission. Apparently the British hoped that Iranian readiness to accept such a commission would increase the chances of its being accepted by the Soviet. The Iranian government felt, however, that it had little to gain and much to lose if such a commission were dispatched and suspected some deal that would legalize Soviet encroachment upon its sovereignty. It

complained in the first
place that it had not been invited to present its views
at the Moscow

States, that a tripartite commission for Iranian affairs, composed
of representatives
of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, be
formed and invested
with wide powers.

"The Soviet Government, true to its policy of respecting the
state independence
of all countries, declined the proposal as one violating the
sovereignty and na-
tional independence of Iran. In this case the Soviet
Government acted in the
spirit of the principles of democracy in relations between
countries and nations
both big and small, which it consistently and steadfastly pursues
in all its actions
on the international scene. . . ."

» *New York Times*, Dec 28, 1945,

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